

Plano

Design Notes // Visual Documentation

Synopsis to keep in mind

By Laura Collins-Hughes

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- "Wonderfully unsettling... *Plano* is a fiercely smart contemporary dream play." - *Vulture*
- Isabel's got pains. Anne's got slugs. And Genevieve doesn't want to talk about hers. She just wants you to eat the damn hummus (she made it!). Let's talk about family nightmares. We mean, uh, memories.

When white-haired Mary descends on her three daughters in Dallas for an impromptu visit, she brings them rosaries. Or she meant to, anyway; she can't find them just this instant. What she does have handy is a morsel of guiding philosophy.

"The hearts of men are naked baby rats," she tells them, meaning it tenderly.

"No they're not," her middle daughter, Genevieve, shoots back. She's more like her mother than she thinks, though. So are her sisters, steeped from birth as they all are in reverence for masculinity.

To the women in Will Arbery's sly, elusive, off-kilter comedy "*Plano*," the male presence is a loud, insistent thing. It's also fiendishly hard to vanquish. Sometimes, they discover, you just have to clobber a guy – with a copy of Karl Ove Knausgaard's "*My Struggle: Book One*" – and bury the body in the backyard.

First seen last June as part of Clubbed Thumb's Summerworks series, "*Plano*" has deepened since then, sharpening its focus on the sisters: Anne (Crystal Finn), a dithery professor whose husband, John (Cesar J. Rosado), seems to be with her for the green card; Genevieve (Miriam Silverman), a sardonic sculptor more successful than her regular-guy husband, Steve (Ryan King); and Isabel (Susannah Flood), the sickly, saintly youngest, who seems O.K. (but is she really?) with being married to God. Hers is, by the way, very much a male deity.

Life moves at a clip in "*Plano*," and Taylor Reynolds's production glides right along. On a set (by Daniel Zimmerman) whose parched lawn spills over the lip of the Connelly Theater stage, it slip-slides through time in a brightly heightened reality that belies the haunting at its core. Its action stalked by a silent male figure called the Faceless Ghost, this is a play about women devoted to, and consumed with, men who don't return the favor.

John, whose real name is Juan, is gay; he spends his spare time dancing at a cowboy club in Plano. "I love you," he assures Anne. "You're my best friend." The words are devastatingly distant, bare of genuine emotion. You can feel her heart shrivel from neglect.

Steve cheats on Genevieve, they get divorced, and he splits in two. One version of him moves into her house. They're in her head, these multiple Steves, but one of the most frolicsome moments of "*Plano*," and cleverest bits of stagecraft, involves a meeting between them. Later Genevieve discovers yet another.

"A third Steve, making music in the garage," she reports. "He won't leave. And the other two Steves are really proud of him."

Mr. Arbery's script is rich with laugh lines like that. "*Plano*" toys with language, form and expectations, and the excellent cast savors its elisions and tonal fluxes. The slight bagginess and perplexity of its second half has to do with problems left unsolved – like how best to use the Faceless Ghost, whose pursuit of Isabel seems too earthbound, and how to clearly depict women who define themselves by the male presences in their lives.

Still, it has a winning playfulness, with characters occasionally signaling an awareness that they're onstage.

"I feel all this pressure to declare a transformation," Anne says as "*Plano*" nears its finish. She doesn't, though, and good for her.







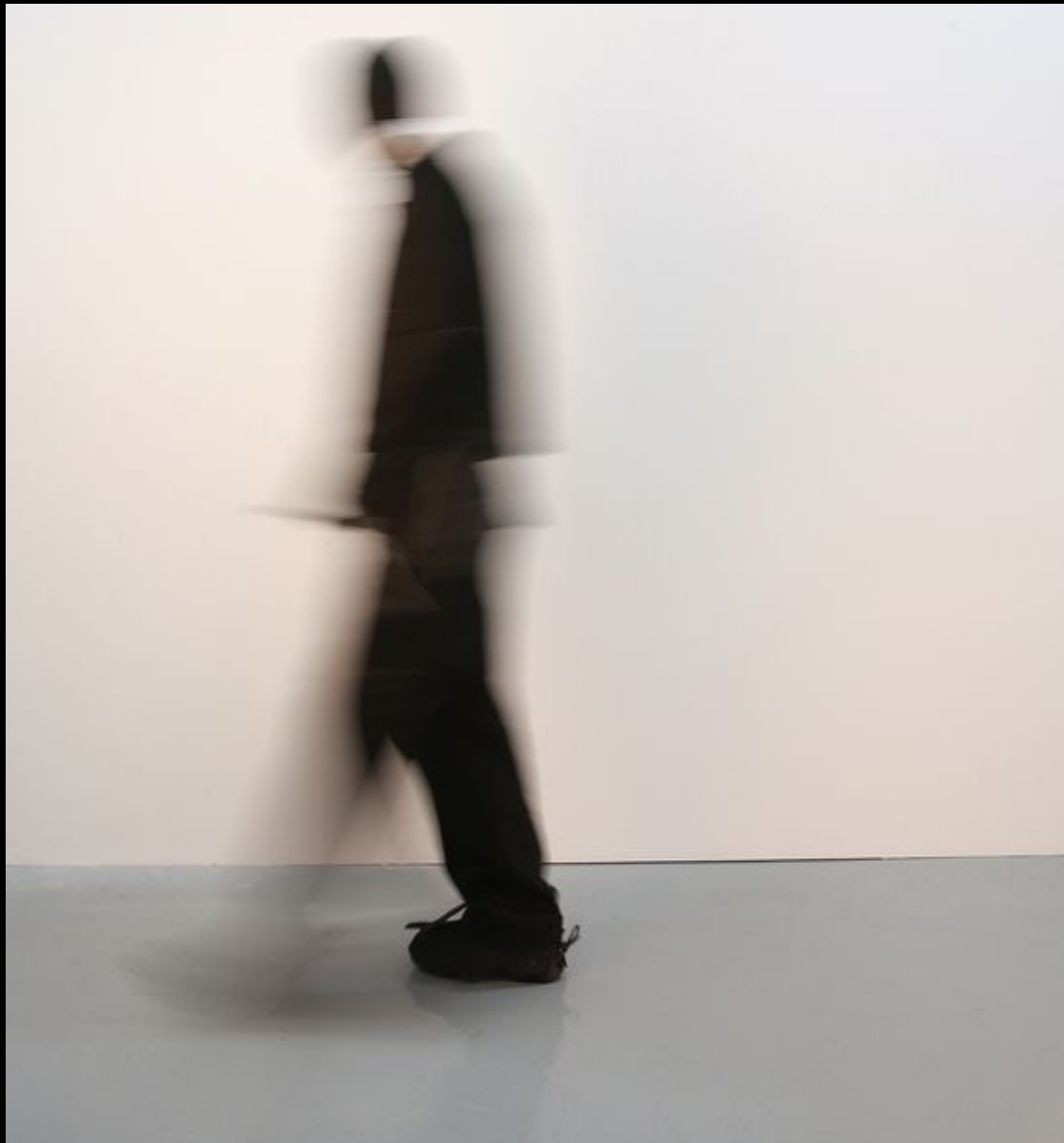








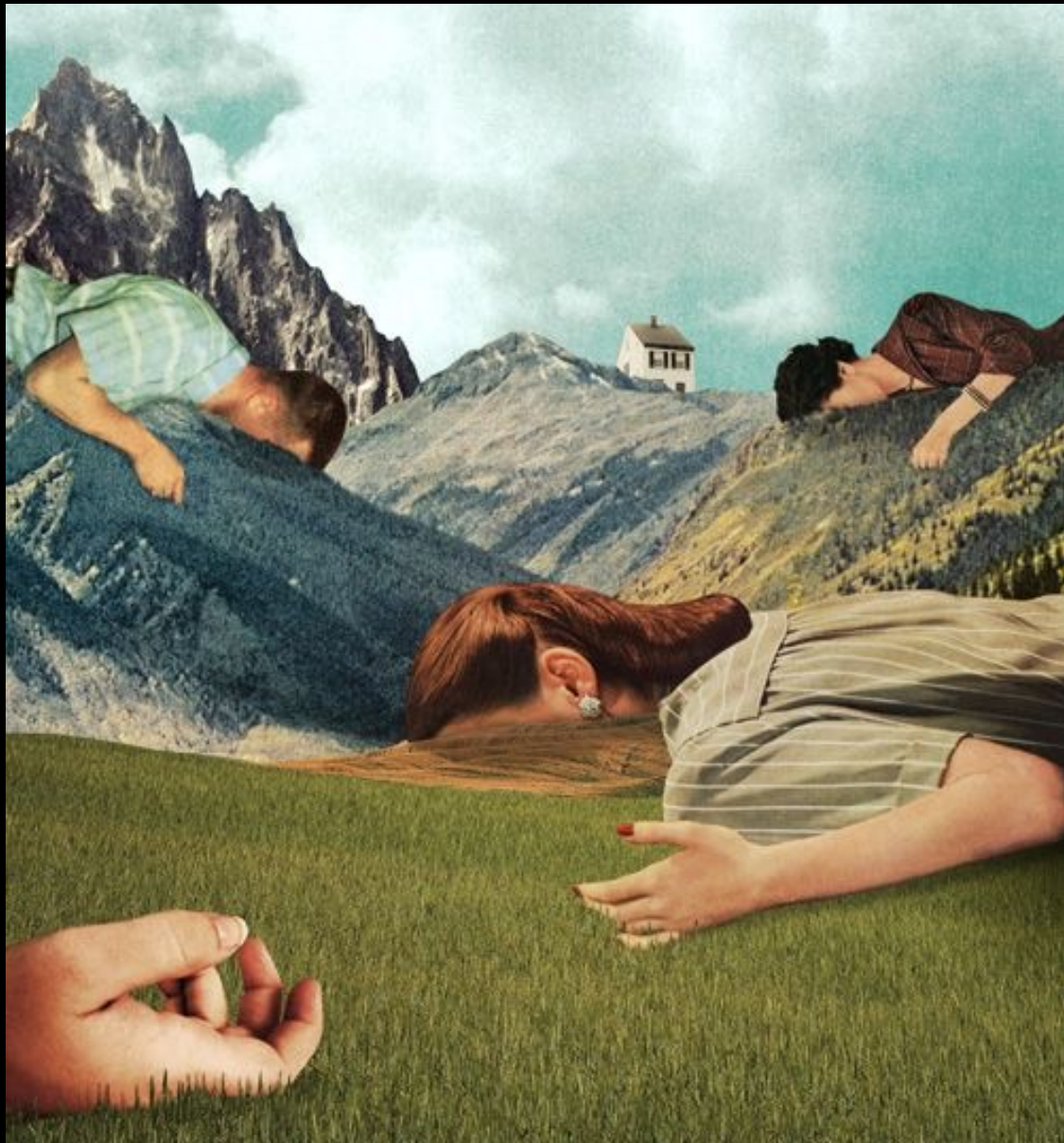
















let's try this again. :)



please

wake up

you're having
nightmares again

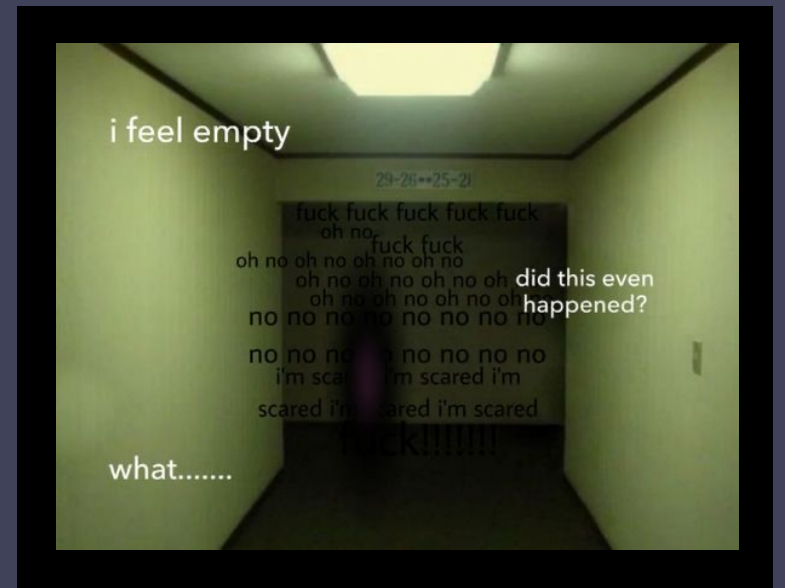


i want to be real



did you forget something?

do you think everything's gonna be ok?



i feel empty

23-26--25-21

fuck fuck fuck fuck
oh no, fuck fuck
oh no oh no oh no oh no
oh no oh no oh no oh no
no no no no no no no no
no no no no no no no no
i'm scared i'm scared i'm
scared i'm scared i'm scared
fuck!!!!!!

did this even
happen?

what.....

Notes from ICM

Disintegration Loop

- Trapped / Pushing / Falling
- Clinging gooeyness
- Plano is the place we're supposed to want to go
- garden of forking path / parallel universe / metaverse
- inherited trauma vs. learned behavior
- A balloon we can't control / decompression
- Pillow fort
- the play doesn't end, it starts again
- faceless ghost connected to disintegration, erosion, dematerialization
- slugs indicative of how each sister deal's with trauma
- What if the play is set in the tiny box?
- What are the kinds of things that rewind? Crankys?
- Heat / The South, Exhaust / Suffocation